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SUBJECT: TFIZ01: DART ASSESSMENT OF AL HILLAH

SUMMARY

1. The DART conducted a security assessment of Al Hillah, capital of the Babil governorate, on 2 May. The town has approximately 400,000, mostly Shia, residents. Coalition forces ranked the threat assessment as "low to none," but acknowledged that there was a problem with organized crime. There have not been any security incidents in the last ten days, and DART security team declared Al Hillah permissive for DART operations. Coalition forces reported finding several caches of UXOs, ammunition dumps, mine fields, and weapons in the city. There are no acute shortages of any basic necessities or utilities in the town, although the communities in the surrounding area were reported to be in greater need of assistance and services. End Summary.

FOOD SECURITY

2. The DART observed no shortage of food and produce available in the local markets in Al Hillah. Coalition forces reported that the normal distribution network under the Oil for Food (OFF) program has remained in place. There are 1,730 food agents for the approximately 1.8 million residents of Babil governorate, with 10 local United Nations (U.N.) OFF workers to monitor the program in the region. Food deliveries were suspended for about two months during the hostilities, but deliveries resumed on 30 April. Most of the grain under the OFF program for Al Hillah is processed in the immediate area at 14 privately owned mills. Although there are currently no shortages of food, problems have been reported with distributions due to a lack of bags. Coalition forces reported that the local residents have raised concerns about shortages of soy protein for chickens. Also, the price of propane gas, which the majority of the population uses for cooking purposes, has increased dramatically.

WATER AND SANITATION

3. The DART saw no evidence of significant water or sanitation-related needs during its visit to Al Hillah. No residents were seen collecting water from surface water sources. Information on the status of the Al Hillah water facilities was gained from Coalition forces.

4. The water facilities in Al Hillah were operating at 75 percent of capacity at the time of the DART assessment. The availability and quantity of water to Al Hillah and outlying communities is good. The Al Hillah province is served by fifteen water treatment plants, three of which produce the majority of the water for the province. Coalition forces were providing technical assistance and supplies for maintenance in both Al Hillah and outlying communities. All repair activities were conducted in conjunction with, and approval of, the local water and sewer utility managers. The primary problem faced by the utility is the lack of power. Efforts are being made to support water and sewer facilities with backup generators and fuel.

5. The DART recommends that every effort be made to restore the main power grid for Al Hillah. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should be encouraged to visit outlying communities to further assess and address water and sanitation needs.

ABUSE PREVENTION

16. There are no confirmed reports of reprisal killings, but revenge attacks are taking place. In one instance, Coalition forces reported that one of the lawyers in town was attacked for helping the military locate a former Ba'ath Party member. His home was attacked by small arms fire, but no one was hurt. The local police responded and arrested the individual. According to the local police chief, approximately ten prisoners are being held by the police, but Coalition forces have yet to confirm this information. There are approximately 250 police operating in Al Hillah. Coalition forces provided the police force with AK-47s on 2 May. The Coalition has already provided a three-day police training program and plans to offer another course soon.

17. A group of lawyers educated at the Babylon University Law School have started a human rights organization to educate Iraqis on the human rights abuses conducted by the former regime as well as teaching human rights principles. The group has occupied the former secret police building and has issued a document in both Arabic and English proclaiming democratic ideals and human rights principles.

LAW AND ORDER

18. Coalition forces are in the process of replacing Ba'ath party judges with new judges and employing 250 Iraqi police. The replacement of the judges was predicated on the understanding that Ba'ath party judges functioned as both prosecutor and judge, a practice which led to a high conviction rate. According to Coalition forces, local residents have reported that people would be accused of crimes and then sent to jail for a year without a trial regardless of their crime. Approximately 70 judges have been relieved of their duties, and five new judges will assume their positions 9 May.

19. As for the police, apparently there are as many as 250 police candidates who have been identified as potential officers. In order to create a "U.S.-type" of police force, Coalition forces have begun a three-day police training course. One of the anticipated roles of the police is to man the six police sub-stations located throughout the city. There are no operable phone lines or radio communications between the substations and the central headquarters. It is hoped that by posting Coalition forces at the headquarters and local police at the substations, the security presence will be increased throughout the city.

110. There have been no reports of insurgency or armed resistance around Al Hillah. However, significant weapons caches have been found, presenting a disposal problem. In one site, there are reportedly two full warehouses stacked from floor to ceiling with munitions. Another problem is that in areas where munitions have been found, some locals have been emptying out the contents to collect the boxes, and in other situations locals have collected the munitions themselves.

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